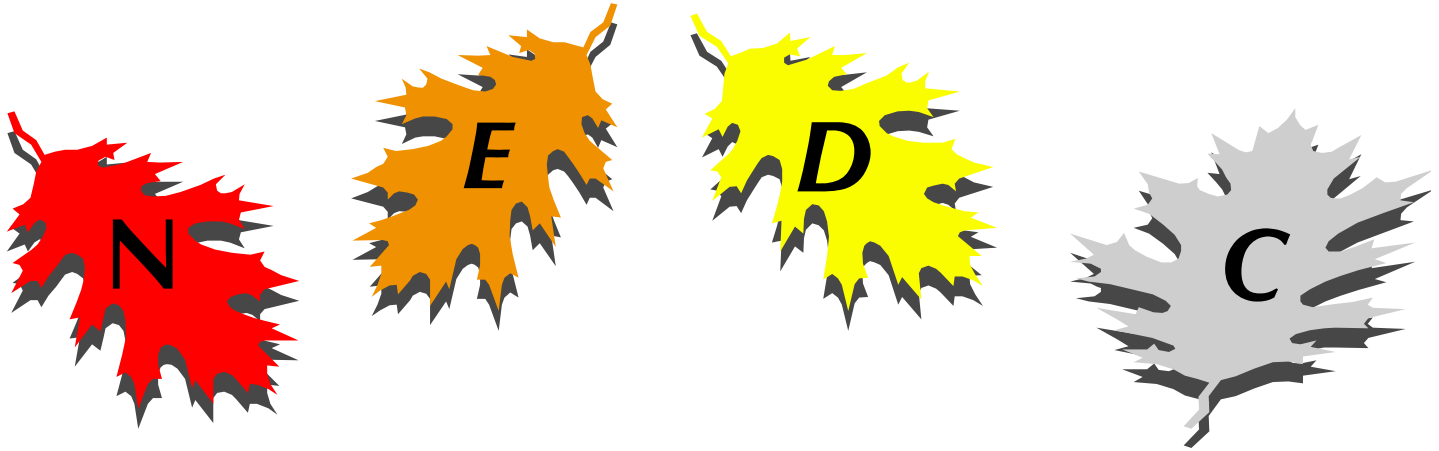


The **NEDC Quarterly** *Update*

Natural Resources Conservation Service



New Season

New Opportunities

New Training

New Courses

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Charles R. Adams, Director
National
Employee
Development
Center

Training Policy

The Natural Resources Conservation Service has the authority to administer its own training programs. The staff members at the National Employee Development Center spend a considerable amount of time responding to training officers and employees regarding legal information impacting training. Many of the NRCS's acts, orders, and decisions must be interpreted within the context of policies and circumstances. It is important for all personnel to know that the training program must have a legal foundation. It is of equal importance that managers who implement training programs know and adhere to training policy. Attendees at the National Training Officers Workshop scheduled for February in Arlington, Texas will receive important information on training policy.



Congratulations are in Order!

After years of study and hard work, the following employees have completed the NRCS Graduate Studies Program. **Congratulations to all of you!**

Lydia E. Collazo received a Master in Engineering Management Degree from Polytechnic University of Puerto Rico.

John R. Piskac received a Master of Public Administration Degree from Kansas State University.

Dana D. York received a Masters of Industrial and Organization Psychology Degree from Middle Tennessee State University.

— *Janie Wade*, X3209



Instructor Communications

(One of a continuing series of articles to assist trainers)

Communication is the exchange of ideas, messages, or information by speech, signals, or writing. It involves all the symbols of the mind, the means of conveying them, and the means of perceiving them. Effective communication requires the sender's words, actions, and behavior to mean the same thing to the receiver of the message. An established "commonness" between the sender and the receiver is necessary to bring about a mutual understanding of communication.

As an instructor, you want to get things done and make things happen. This is your role as a change agent. Communication is the means by which you accomplish this. Without effective communication there will be no instruction, no teaching.

The most common methods of communication are oral and written.

Oral communication is through the spoken word. It is the method you use in your conversations, your work, and your social life. It is the most direct method of communication, particularly on a face-to-face basis. Oral communication is used extensively in conducting sessions and meetings.

Written communication refers to that which is in writing, such as letters, memoranda, or telegrams. You can use written notes, problems, case studies, and handouts as supplemental aids to your oral communication. In conducting training sessions, however, written communication will not be your primary method of communication.

In addition to these two methods, an instructor can communicate by using visual and audio devices, such as charts, signs, flashing lights, bells, pictures, silence, gestures, facial expressions, and manner of walking or sitting. Some of these devices supplement or aid in the communication, and others are methods of communication. Some represent a conscious effort to communicate; other do not. Much depends on how each device is used. For example, a picture can be used to supplement what has been said or it can be used to communicate the complete idea without an explanation.

Some devices, such as gestures or facial expressions, can be used in conjunction with oral communication; many of these may be unconscious. Thus, unless you are careful, you may communicate the wrong ideas accidentally. Your frown or scowl may be interpreted as dissatisfaction with the group, an individual, or a comment. A distracting gesture can take attention away from what is being said.

— Dave Drennan, X3206

Courses are on Schedule!

With FY 97 now upon us, NEDC has completed the training schedule for the upcoming year. We have reviewed your mail messages as well as your input into the Training Information Program (TIP), and have come up with a tentative schedule of 110 classes. Over 3300 people are requesting training for the coming year, including 2823 people currently enrolled in TIP.

Because more of our courses are interdisciplinary, we have, on a trial basis, moved away from subject categories and courses now will be listed in alphabetical order. This means that when you are enrolling people into courses, the subject category box will now show the fiscal year followed by the letters of the alphabet.

One course that has caused some confusion is the Leading For Excellence course. NEDC will be advertising availability of this course and accepting applications for this training at a future date. Those who previously indicated an interest through the Training Needs Inven-

tory (TNI) will receive first priority, but are still required to submit an application.

TIP is now available for your use if you wish to make changes to the training schedule. Because some classes have long waiting lists, please ensure that employees you have enrolled into a course meet the eligibility requirements and have accomplished the prerequisites of the course. This ensures that the proper employees are attending the class and provides all participants with the best possible training. It is also important when enrolling employees you prioritize them in the order in which they should attend. Training Officers should check with the nominated employees individual department to ensure proper priority.

If you haven't received the training schedule and would like one, you may contact the NEDC staff at 817-334-5401, ext 3210 to obtain a copy.

— Tony Lovell, X3214

Irrigation Training Toolbox Provides Resources

You will soon receive a valuable new training instrument - the Irrigation Training Toolbox. The Toolbox is to be used by area and field specialists for developing customized irrigation training. The Toolbox is divided into eight sections: Soil-Water-Plant Relationship, Irrigation System Planning, Irrigation System Design, Water Measurement, Irrigation Scheduling, Soil Moisture Measurement, Irrigation Water Management Plan, and Irrigation System Evaluation.



The Toolbox is filled with NRCS and other agency manuals, NRCS lesson plans, and private industry publications, textbooks, and videos. This previously unavailable material will be an excellent resource for your irrigation specialists. The Toolbox should be routed within a state on an as-needed basis.

The Irrigation Training Team, when confronted with the enormous challenge to develop irrigation training "NOW", realized that only a portion of the needed training could be developed within the targeted time frame of 6 months. The Team creatively asked itself, "If we can't develop the training in time, what can we do instead?" The Toolbox of design material was the result of that challenge.

As the Toolbox concept progressed, well over 100 different pieces of material were selected for inclusion into the Toolbox. NRCS partners and private companies entered wholeheartedly into the project. Some material was provided free while other materials were highly discounted. Even with this help, each of the 100 Toolbox sets (2 boxes) is valued at \$425.

Toolboxes will go to states, partners, and a number of interested agencies. At least one other agency is planning to use our Toolbox as the launching pad to develop their own Toolbox. Plans are to continue adding to the Toolbox - both locally and agency-wide. Specialists are expected to add lesson plans and other material they have on hand or develop. As states provide additional material for the Toolbox, these materials will be distributed nationwide.

Plans are to assemble and distribute the Toolboxes by the end of October, 1996. Look for your set soon.

— Don Holley, X3204

FY97 NEDC Courses are on Schedule

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	96
		1	2	3	4	5	OCTOBER
6	7	8	9	10	11	12	
13	14 <i>COLUMBUS DAY</i>	15	16	17	18	19	
20	21	22	23	24	25	26	
27	28 Employee Development Board Meeting, Albuquerque, NM	29	30	31			
					1	2	NOVEMBER
3	4	5	6	7	8	9	
10	11 <i>VETERAN'S DAY</i>	12	13	14	15	16	
17	18	19	20	21	22	23	
24	25	26	27	28 <i>THANKSGIVING DAY</i>	29	30	
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	DECEMBER
		Managing Quality Workshop, Columbia, SC---					
8	9	10	11	12	13	14	
	Effective Interpersonal Skills, Lincoln, NE----- Managing Quality Workshop, Casper, WY----- Soil Engineering In Conservation Operations, Fort Worth, TX-----						
15	16	17	18	19	20	21	
22	23	24	25 <i>CHRISTMAS DAY</i>	26	27	28	DECEMBER
29	30	31					

FY 1997 Graduate Study Program Selectees

We are pleased to announce the selectees for the FY 1997 Graduate Studies Program. The NRCS Graduate Studies Program is a National competitive program that pays tuition and related expenses to selected employees for graduate studies, for the purpose of enhancing the Agency's expertise in targeted priority developmental needs areas. Following are the employees selected for the FY 1997 program.

Congratulations to all of you!

***Sandra Byrd-Hughes - Washington, D.C.
MA Environmental Policy - George Washington
University***

***Richard Fasching - Bozeman, Montana
MS Agronomy - Montana State University***

***Jim Fortner - Lincoln, Nebraska
MS Agronomy - University of Nebraska***

***Carol Franks - Lincoln, Nebraska
Ph.D. Agronomy/Ecology - University of Nebraska***

***Michael Gonzales- Beltsville, Maryland
MA Sociology - University of Maryland***

***Janet Hall - Phoenix, Arizona
MEP Landscape Ecology - Arizona State University***

***Michael Hall - Abbeville, South Carolina
MS Agronomy/Range Pasture Mgmt - Clemson University***

***Sheryl Hallmark-Kunickis - Louisburg, North Carolina
Ph.D. Soils - North Carolina State University***

***Stephen Henry - Columbia, South Carolina
Ph.D. Biological and Agricultural EngineerMontana***

***David Howell - Lake City, Florida
MS Fluvial Geomorphology - University of Florida***

***Michael Hubbs - Ames, Iowa
MS Soil Quality - Auburn University***

***David Kitchie - Oswego, New York
MS Wetlands Biology - SUNY College of Environmental
Science & Forestry***

***Michael Kucera - Lincoln, Nebraska
MS Water Quality/Water Resources - University of
Nebraska***

***Virginia Murphy - Washington, D.C.
MLA Landscape Architecture - University of
Michigan***

***Hanh Nguyen - Fort Worth, Texas
MS Telecommunications - Southern Methodist
University/Dallas, TX***

***Paul Reich - Washington, D.C.
MA GIS & Remote Sensing - University of Maryland***

***Gregory Scott - Woodward, Oklahoma
MS Geomorphology - Oklahoma State University***

***James Shea - Moscow, Idaho
MS Geography GIS & Remote Sensing- University of
Idaho***

***Carlos Suarez - Carlisle, Pennsylvania
MS Geoenvironmental Studies-Remote Sensing -
Shippensburg University of PA***

***Glen Sutton - Hope, Arkansas
MS Agricultural Economics - University of Arkansas***

***Christopher Williams - Amherst, Massachusetts
MS Soil Quality - University of Massachusetts***

***Kenneth Wolfe, Jr. - Columbus, Ohio
MA Water Quality - Ohio State University***

— Janie Wade, X3209

Visual Aids— Do-It-Yourself

Visual aids enhance presentations and training programs, and now they are easier than ever to create. Software packages such as *Power Point* and *Harvard Graphics* make it possible for people in most NRCS offices to produce attractive slides and overhead transparencies quickly and effortlessly. Even though it is simpler now, let's not forget the purposes and the principles of good visuals.

Purposes of Visuals

- Attract and maintain attention
- Reinforce main ideas
- Illustrate the spoken word
- Increase retention

Principles of Visuals

The most effective slides and overhead transparencies are pictorial—maps, graphs, charts, diagrams. However text visuals are often used. Keep these principles in mind.

- ③ Use no more than six words per line and six lines per slide/transparency.
- ③ Use, but don't overuse color. For most visuals, three or four colors is desirable.
- ③ Communicate a single idea per visual.
- ③ Use a maximum of two typefaces per visual.
- ③ Use bullets rather than numbers when listing items that are not sequential.
- ③ Apply the six foot rule. Normally, if you can read your original in a 8 1/2 x 11 inch format at six feet, your audience will be able to read it when projected.
- ③ Use upper and lowercase letter. Generally lowercase letters are easier to read than capitals.

Nice visual aids can be created in a short time, but don't get bit by the *Power Point Bug*. **Rule of Thumb:** If words alone can communicate the concept, idea, or point of the presentation, think twice about creating a visual—no matter how easily done. It is the quality not the quantity of visuals that count.

— Eddy Robertson, X3204

Training on Internet!
It's New and It's Here



Congratulations to all Education Grants Recipients!



On July 22, 1996, 100 NRCS employees were selected nationwide to participate in the Education Grants Program in FY 1997.

The Education Grants Program is one component of the S.O.A.R. Program (Supplying Opportunities for Advancement and Redirection.) The Education Grants Program is a scholarship program which provides developmental opportunities for employees in grades GS 1-10. The program is designed to give highly motivated employees opportunities for career growth, development, and change.

Other components of the S.O.A.R. Program includes the USDA Career Enhancement Program, the Academic Degree Program, and the Mentoring Program. Information regarding these programs can be found in your General Manual 360, Part 411, dated July 1996.

— Janie Wade, X3209

Evaluation and Strategic Planning — A Never Ending Process

Evaluation as a strategic planning tool has been around for quite a while. In the last two years it has become even more popular due to economic conditions. Reorganizing, downsizing, and right sizing has caused many organizations, both private and federal, to stress more accountability in costs and programs. Evaluation is now becoming the method used for accountability.

Evaluation is now part of the strategic planning of private and federal organizations. Strategic planning sets goals, objectives, and achievable results. Evaluation provides feedback which allows organizations to improve on their goals and objectives.

The National Employee Development Center uses evaluation in its strategic planning of training

courses to ensure success in its course offerings to NRCS employees.

- ❑ There are four steps to any successful evaluation effort:
- ❑ The organization must be motivated to use evaluation.
- ❑ A method must be devised to collect data about results.
- ❑ The information collected should be analyzed and compared with organizational goals and objectives.
- ❑ The organization must be willing to act on the results of the evaluation.

NEDC will keep you informed about evaluation of our training courses in an effort to provide you with better data about the results of NEDC training courses.

—Wanda Ellicott, X3208

Leading for Excellence Continues to Lead

Leadng for Excellence continues to be one of the most respected and most requested courses offered to NRCS employees. This fifth and final course offered in the Management Excellence Series is available to all GS-13 or above employees through an application process. It is recommended that the participants have at least two years' experience in managing a program or supervising employees before applying.

Fiscal Year 1996 saw 84 NRCS employees participate in the course. These 84 participants represented 31 organizational entities within the agency, including states, institutes, centers, and NHQ.

The unconventional delivery system for Leading, operating for the past two years, has been the primary reason for its success. Sixteen vendors were offered to eligible participants on a qualified vendor list. Participants, in consultation with their supervisors, chose the vendor that best suited their individual needs and was located as close to their duty station as possible. Tuition cost was funded by NEDC, while travel and per diem costs were covered by the employing office.

Delivered by such organizations as The Center for Creative Leadership and The Covey Leadership Center, and universities, such as Yale, Harvard and George Washington, the leadership training offered is among the best in the country. Some of the comments from participants in FY96 include: "Everyone who has the opportunity to attend this program should," and "the real power of this training is the opportunity to learn leadership skills from both the public and private sector perspectives."

As soon as FY97 funding is available for Leading for Excellence, NEDC will be advertising availability and accepting applications for the training. Those who have indicated an interest through the Training Needs Inventory will receive first priority.

— Sue Brooks, X3212

Using Audio Tapes for Training

Using audio tapes is an easy way to learn while doing other things, such as walking, jogging, driving, or working around the house. Audio cassettes offer an easy way to learn. In the past few years the subjects, speakers, and technical quality of the tapes have greatly improved. The cost for a cassette player, needed to play the audio tapes, has dropped tremendously and most people have a player available to them. If you don't, consider investing in one and give audio tapes a try. The selection of educational tapes is almost endless and can be an effective part of your career development.

Here are some reasons why:


1. You can do other things while listening to tapes. With a portable cassette player, you can learn while exercising, commuting, working around the house, or any number of mechanical things that does not require 100% concentration.
2. You can replay material at any time to clarify or reinforce what you've heard.
3. Many of the current management and leadership books are now on tape. If you read the book, you can reinforce what you read by listening to a tape that covers the same material.
4. You can have exposure to some of the most respected authorities in the management and leadership fields.
5. Tapes are convenient, easy to use, and easily transportable.
6. You can write down good ideas as you hear them so they will not be forgotten.
7. You can carry tapes with you for listening during any downtime you encounter during the day. So, instead of just listening to music on your way to work, why not try an educational tape. You'll be glad you did!

— Bob Rymell, X3205


Listening to Learn; Learning to Listen

Now hear this: listening is the most used aspect of human communication.


In a typical workday:

Trainers 

- present lectures, films and tapes for training participants to listen to
- listen to participants comments and questions
- interview and listen to subject-matter experts and line managers;

Executives, managers, and supervisors 

- listen to superiors and subordinates to gather information for decision making and problem solving
- listen to and mediate among differences and conflicts in staff opinions
- interview and listen to prospective managers, staff, clients, and customers;

Staff members 

- listen to comments, announcements, and directions from managers, coworkers, and union representatives
- listen to internal and external customers' comments, questions, complaints, and compliments.

The opportunities for understanding or misunderstanding are countless. So, if people in an organization have poor listening skills, the costs may be high:

- Wasted meeting time;
- Inaccurate orders and shipments;
- Lost sales;
- Inadequately informed, misinformed, confused, or angry staff and customers.

Of course, poor listening is likely to affect people's private lives adversely too. And an unhappy private life may be a distraction or disaster that diminishes a worker's job performance. (continued on next page)

Listening to Learn; Learning to Listen *(continued from previous page)*

As a rule, adults have formally studied reading, writing, and speaking, but not listening. Fortunately, listening is a skill that can be developed and many large companies and Federal agencies have recognized the importance of listening and have instituted successful training programs for listening skills improvement.

"...Be a good listener. Encourage others to talk about themselves."

Dale Carnegie "Six Ways to Make People Like You" How to Win Friends and Influence People.

— Georgia Spiller, X3203

Two NEDC courses, *"Effective Interpersonal Skills"* and *"The Effective Facilitator"* address listening skills as a component of the course. Call NEDC for more information.



The **NEDC Quarterly** *Update*

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If you have additional questions or comments regarding any of the information in the NEDC Quarterly Update, please contact the appropriate NEDC staff member at their extension listed in the NEDC Update at 817-334-5401.

The NEDC Update is published quarterly. For additional copies, write or call:

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